

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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REP. MARKEY DECLARES VICTORY FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

HOUSE BALKS AT REPUBLICAN-LED ASSAULT ON VALUED INSTITUTION

Washington, D.C. – The House of Representatives took a critical step today to partially restore funding for the public broadcasting system voting (284-140) for an amendment to the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education (LHHS) Appropriations bill. Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), the ranking member on the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, has been leading the effort to protect public broadcasting.

“The children and families from across America, sent a clear message to Congress today: Don’t mess with Clifford the Big Red Dog,” said Rep. Markey. “We took a critical step today to restore some funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, we need to make sure that the critical, quality programming provided by public broadcasting does not get hijacked by a Republican Administration that is out of touch with the American people.”

Although the House vote to restore funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for the fiscal year 2006, which will provide assistance to over 1,000 local stations across the country, no funding was restored for the Ready to Learn program or for digital facilities and interconnection services for the public broadcasting stations. The Ready to Learn program, which supports children's programming for children ages 2 to 8 years of age to prepare them for school and literacy, remains unfunded in the House approved measure.

Moreover, the public broadcasting system remains embroiled in partisan controversy in its management. Today, Patricia S. Harrison, former Republican Party co-chair, was named as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

Rep. Markey is urging the CPB to reconsider nominating a partisan to this non-partisan post and is soliciting support from members of the House of Representatives to join him in calling for the resignation of CPB Chairman Kenneth Y. Tomlinson.

“This vote is an important victory but certainly no the end of our fight to protect public broadcasting,” Rep. Markey said. “Public broadcasting does not belong to any political party – it belongs to the people of the United States who, according to recent polling, find it to be one of the “most valuable” institutions in America.”

For more information Representative Markey’s work to preserve children’s television check out <http://www.house.gov/markey/> a copy of the letter is below.

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Mr. Kenneth Y. Tomlinson
Chairman, Corporation for Public Broadcasting
401 Ninth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004-2129

Dear Mr. Tomlinson:

We write out of concern for the future of public broadcasting. In your zeal to impose a political point of view on a nonpolitical institution, you have lost sight of your core mission to strengthen and protect this critical public media platform that does more every day for the education of children in this country than any other media outlet. For the sake of preserving this national treasure, we urge you to resign.

As you know, CPB’s charter requires you to encourage public broadcasters to strive toward balanced and objective reporting on issues of a controversial nature, but in doing so, you are prohibited from striving to impose a particular political viewpoint. Allowing political party priorities to infect the governance of CPB is debilitating to the work of public broadcasting and inconsistent with both the letter and the spirit of your charter. Unfortunately, this is exactly what has occurred.

- * You have attempted to influence the hiring process to ensure the appointment of persons favored by the White House;
- * You have hired lobbyists to try to block legislation that would have reduced the dominance of political appointees relative to appointees representing independent public television stations on the CPB board.
- * You have validated your critics by nominating the former co-chair of the Republican National committee to the sensitive position of CPB President.

You have also reportedly urged public television station managers to make sure that their programming better reflect the “Republican mandate.”

Public broadcasting does not belong to any political party – it belongs to the people of the United States who, according to recent polling, find it to be one of the “most valuable” institutions in America. Moreover, regarding your own attempts to prove “bias”, it is useful to note that more than 40 percent of the public found PBS news and public affairs programming to be “most trusted” compared to other media – higher than any other news network.

All this suggests that you are either out of touch with the institution you run or deliberately attempting to undermine its public legitimacy. In either event, you are the wrong person to be chairman of the most trusted media network in the United States. Accordingly, we urge you to step aside in order to allow a person committed to the mission of CPB to rebuild what you have torn down.

Sincerely,
